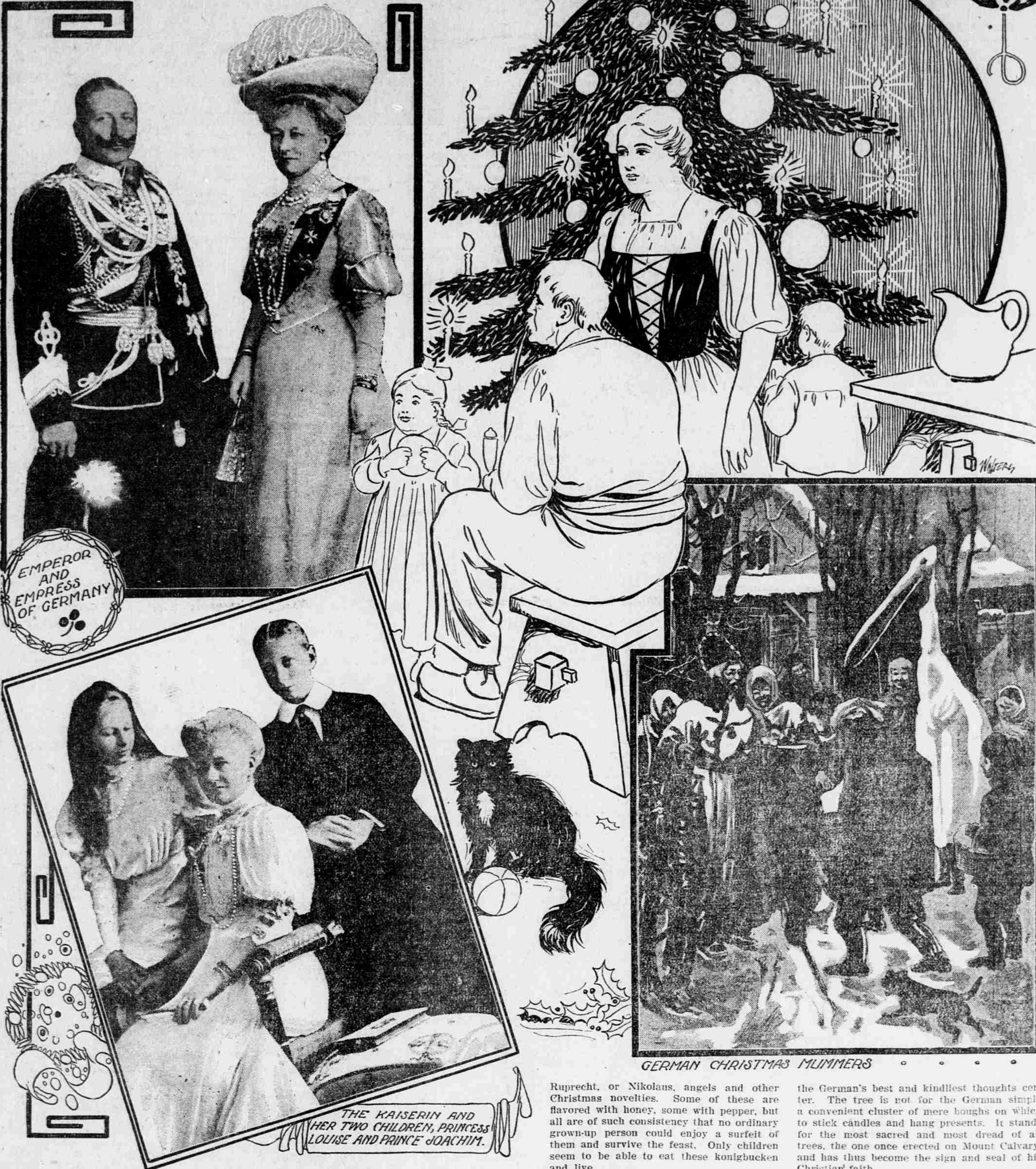


# CHRISTMAS in the FATHERLAND

By BELLE E. LUDWIG.



EMPEROR AND EMPRESS OF GERMANY

THE KAISERIN AND HER TWO CHILDREN, PRINCESS LOUISE AND PRINCE JOACHIM.

GERMAN CHRISTMAS MUMMERS

**W**E ARE told that the German surrounds his Christmas with more of an element of mysticism than does he of any other nation. It is probably a survival of the far back days when his painted ancestors celebrated their mysterious rites, at Christmas, under their dark groves of forest oaks. In nearly every district of the fatherland there still remains the quaint and queerest of Christmas customs, whose origin is lost in the hoariest antiquity. They have all in the process of time assumed a Christian character, more or less burlesqued, but the folk-loreists will tell you that they date from the days of Wotan and Freya.

The peasants of Silesia, the woodmen of the Black Forest, and the hillsides of Bavaria, nappily know nothing of the origin of the queer pranks they play at Christmas; they only know that they have been handed down by their fathers, and that they in turn will hand down the immemorial customs to their children.

In Germany the old custom of mumming is still kept up. From house to house these mummers go. The shepherds, especially, are entertaining. They are the comic men of the troupe who, in a half grotesque and half serious way, represent the events of the nativity.

There was a famous company of Christmas mummers, a couple of years ago in Bavaria, with a magnificent looking first shepherd, who never wearied of poking fun at the minister of finance.

After these roving villagers have recited their farago of nonsense, or it may be their

lines of surpassing beauty, before a person's house they are generally rewarded for their pains with gifts of lard, bacon and eggs.

But with all the mysticism and ultra sentimental ways of regarding Christmas the German never forgets it is eminently a season of good cheer. Pork in every form and beer usually take the place of roast beef, turkey, and stronger drinks. Then they also have the boar's head with a lemon impaled between its grinning tusks. Of course this delicacy dates back to Wotan's day. Tradition says Wotan was fond of the boar's head, but it is not easy to see where the lemon comes in, as the god was certainly not familiar with this tart fruit. In Brandenburg and the Uckermark any pig's head will do (the stock of boar's heads would not hold out), and round this animal's head are garnishings of sausage and green cabbage.

Silesia is a province which has especially earned a reputation for succulent dishes. Some of the most renowned of German gastronomical authorities have lent additional luster to the place by being born there. At Christmas time the dish most in request among the Silesians is a smoked pig's head with baked fruit packed in it, and also generously spread over the whole dish. This dainty rejoices in the name of Himmelsreich (the kingdom of heaven).

In North Germany the pig's head is not as prominent as in the south. Here there is more miscellaneous Christmas eating, hearty enough but altogether in variance with American tastes. Cakes of all sizes and shapes are also baked and eaten, and some of these have a toughness of gutta-percha and a hardness of granite. These cakes take the form of Knecht

Ruprecht, or Nikolaus, angels and other Christmas novelties. Some of these are flavored with honey, some with pepper, but all are of such consistency that no ordinary grown-up person could enjoy a surfeit of them and survive the feast. Only children seem to be able to eat these konigbucklen and live.

Thuringia boasts of another curious Christmas delicacy which only the initiated can truly appreciate, this is boiled suet dumplings and herrings. One cannot be blamed for asking, why this mixture? Was the herring also favored by Wotan?

The herring, as a Christmas dainty, is also favored throughout Saxony, but there takes the form of a salad, and is eaten with smoked pork, and a delicate kind of sauerkraut, in which caraway seeds are prominent. The Saxony peasant's Christmas table is invariably decked with these dishes on Christmas eve, and remains thus spread out during the night. His idea in doing this is that angels, possibly weary of nectar and ambrosia, may condescend to visit his humble abode while he sleeps and regale themselves with Saxon smoked beef and herring salad.

It is interesting to watch the transformation of a German village at Christmas from its usually treeless appearance into a town laid in a forest of firs. Wagon loads of these resin-scented trees are sent from the hills of Thuringia, the Hartz and Silesia, and are put up in even rows in the streets and squares of the town. There is nothing like it in any other country. For a fortnight before the great feast these long avenues of "Tannen" are crowded with eager purchasers, men, women and children of all ages, and of every station in life. The great desire of each is to get a symmetrical tree, and as few trees are literally perfect in shape, it is the business of the tree merchant to supply branches and thus give the tree the desired roundness.

It is the tree that is the attraction of every German home from the kaiser's palace down to the humblest peasant's hut, and around it

the German's best and kindest thoughts center. The tree is not for the German simply a convenient cluster of mere boughs on which to stick candles and hang presents. It stands for the most sacred and most dread of all trees, the one once erected on Mount Calvary, and has thus become the sign and seal of his Christian faith.

## A Christmas Decoration.

When the children have tired of even their new possessions (and how soon the new becomes old) and it is too early for the sandman to pay his nightly visit, try this simple amusement: Suspend a wreath of holly or evergreen from a doorway and give to each child an equal quantity of nuts, paper-wrapped candles or favors that will stand handling, then see who can throw the most articles through the wreath into a basket placed to catch them. Give a simple reward to add zest to the game.

In the same manner the game of "twos" is conducted. Take a large napkin or piece of stout paper. Place a lot of nuts or hard candies in the center. Let a child take hold of each corner and give three vigorous tosses, singing:

"Goodies, goodies, dance, my Christmas goodies Up they go, down they go; dance, my Christmas goodies."

Then there will be a lively scrimmage to see who can recover the most. These little devices will make a jolly ending to the happiest day in the year for the children. Put them to bed with pretty songs ringing in their ears.

"Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night—Christmas where snow peaks stand solem and white.

Christmas where the cornfields lie sunny and bright, Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night—

## TO CURE A COUGH

Or Break a Cold in 24 Hours

Mix two ounces of Glycerine and a half ounce of Virgin Oil of Pine compound pure with a half pint of Straight Whisky. Shake well and take a tea spoonful every four hours.

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## CONSTITUTIONAL OBJECTION.



Mrs. Thrifty—Well, if you're thirsty I'll give you a glass of water to drink.

Weary Willy—I dare not touch water, mum. I've got an iron constitution and it might rust it.

## Why Joyner Left Home.

"Are you ready to receive the obligations?" asked the most upright supreme hocus-pocus of the Order of Hoot Owls.

"I am," said the candidate, firmly. "Then take a sip of this prussic acid, place your right hand in this pot of boiling lead, rest your left hand upon this revolving buzz-saw, close your eyes and repeat after me—"

Early next morning shreds of Joyner's clothing were found upon the bushes and trees all along the road to Pottsville, 30 miles distant, and at Scrabbletown, 69 miles away, he was reported still headed west.—Judge.

The jurymen who toward the end of a very long trial wished to know what the terms "plaintiff" and "defendant" signified is not alone in his ignorance. A writer in the Philadelphia Press tells of a man whose coat had been stolen. He had charged a suspicious-looking individual with the theft.

"You say this man stole your coat?" said the magistrate. "Do I understand that you prefer charges against him?"

"Well, no, your honor," replied the plaintiff. "I prefer the coat, if it's all the same to you."—Youth's Companion.

## A Natural Cause.

"I think," said the smart child, reflectively, "that Hungary must be the most human-like of all the nations."

"Why so, my child?" asked the fond papa.

"Because," the smart child answered, "it is governed by its Diet."

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